United Nations

Daily Highlights

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MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

• United Nations Spokesman confirms that Iraq has removed six police posts from Kuwaiti territory; Iraq says, in letter to UNSCOM, that due to "ongoing aggression", it cannot be "held responsible for safety of any aircraft whatsoever within Iraqi airspace".

• Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ismat Kittani, tells correspondents at Headquarters that situation in Somalia has "greatly improved"; says most important area now is that of political reconciliation between Somali factions.

• In message to 1993 session of Conference on Disarmament beginning in Geneva tomorrow, Secretary-General says Conference must take advantage of momentum from success of Chemical Weapons Convention to make progress on other issues.

• Four UNTAC observers -- two British, a Chilean and a Cambodian interpreter -- detained by National Alliance of Democratic Kampuchea.

• Afghanistan asks United Nations for emergency assistance for some 90,000 Tajik refugees who have fled to Afghanistan due to recent developments in Tajikistan; that country also ask United Nations for aid to alleviate effects of civil conflict.

• League of Arab States urges Security Council to establish "international force" to protect Palestinians in occupied Arab territories.

• Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women opens 12th session in Vienna to discuss equal participation of women in political, economic and cultural life.

• Three-day Disarmament Seminar on arms proliferation and confidence- and security-building measures begins in Asuncion, Paraguay.

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For information media--not an official record

The Secretary-General's Spokesman, Joe Sills, confirmed today that Iraq had removed the six police posts on the Kuwaiti side of the border between the two countries, demarcated by the United Nations. Three posts were removed during the night and the rest this morning, under the supervision of United Nations military observers.

Kuwait had protested the continued presence of the Iraqi police posts on its territory saying it was a serious violation of its sovereignty and territorial integrity and constituted a serious breach of Security Council resolutions. The protest was contained in a letter of 15 January to the President of the Security Council, signed by the Chargé d'affaires of the Kuwaiti Permanent Mission to the United Nations, Nabeela Al Mulla.

In a related development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iraq has said in a statement that because of the "ongoing military aggression" carried out by the United States, United Kingdom and French fighter planes over its territory, it was "forced to exercise its right of self-defence" and therefore could not be "held responsible for the safety of any aircraft whatsoever within Iraqi airspace".

Accordingly, Iraq said, the interpretation given to its earlier response to the United Nations Special Commission on Iraqi Disarmament, namely that it constituted a refusal on the part of Iraq of the Commission's notification and an abdication of Iraq's obligations, was nothing but "a distortion of the Iraqi position".

The statement emphasized that Iraq agreed to ensure the safety and security of United Nations personnel on its territories, but the prevailing situation had obliged the country to ask the Special Commission to assume responsibility for the safety of its own flights.

The statement was sent in reply to the Deputy Executive Chairman of the Special Commission, Pierce S. Cordan, addressed to the President of the Security Council and signed by Nizar Hamdoon, Iraq's Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
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At a press conference at Headquarters today, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Somalia, Ismat Kittani, described the situation in Somalia as "a great improvement" and expressed the hope that, in a few weeks, it would turn into "a manageable situation".

He told correspondents that while a great deal of patience was needed to bring the country back to normalcy, there were now three main areas of active consideration. One, he said, was the time-table and modus operandi for the transition from the Unified Task Force (UNITAF) to a United Nations-led operation which has been the subject of intensive negotiations last week.

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Another concern was how to move to the stage of restructuring, reconstructing, and developing Somalia without neglecting the relief operation. However, the most important area was that of political reconciliation between the Somali factions, since without political cohesion in Somalia, there would be no authority to speak for the country, Mr. Kittani said.

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The United Nations Conference on Disarmament, which will begin in Geneva tomorrow, will represent the first multilateral post-cold-war agreement in the field of disarmament and its provisions on the destruction and elimination of the devastating weapons of mass destruction, according to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali.

In his message to the 1993 session of the Conference, he urged that the Conference take advantage of the momentum created by the successful conclusion of the Chemical Weapons Convention to make progress on a number of issues.

It was not the case that disarmament was "a facet of the cold war and no longer centrally relevant to international security needs", Mr. Boutros-Ghali said. While it was true that some important arms limitation agreements were concluded during those years, "the end of the cold war has brought disarmament back on to the centre stage", he said.

The Secretary-General also stressed that the previous balance of power between two military Powers had been replaced by instability and volatility in many regions of the globe and it was therefore appropriate for the Conference, as the single multilateral negotiating body on disarmament, to take bold steps to examine in depth what direction it would take in order to make a decisive contribution in making the world a safe and secure place for all.

At the Conference, the negotiation of a comprehensive nuclear test ban treaty, prevention of an arms race in outer space and ensuring transparency in military matters are among the issues slated for discussion. The mandate of the Conference is to promote the attainment of general and complete disarmament under effective international control.

Its agenda is expected to reflect a number of recommendations from the 47th session of the General Assembly including consideration of a report of the Secretary-General entitled "New dimensions of arms regulation and disarmament in the post-cold war era". The Conference is expected to submit the result of those deliberations to the Assembly's Political and Security Committee.

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The United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) today reported that four naval observers have been detained by a unit of the National Alliance of Democratic Kampuchea (NADK).

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According to a spokesman for UNTAC, the four observers -- two British, a Chilean and a Cambodian interpreter -- were detained yesterday after trying for several weeks to discuss the military situation in the province of Kompong Thom with the NADK. The spokesman said the detained observers had reported that they were being treated well and were "busy trying to teach English their captors".

UNTAC was trying to negotiate the release of the men in Phnom Penh in the context of the Mixed Military Working Group and in Kompong Thom through the NADK representatives. UNTAC had so far been unable to get a response from the NADK as to why the men were detained and when they would be freed.

This is the sixth time that United Nations personnel is being detained by the NADK in a 2-month period and follows an incident last Friday in which an American Military Observer was detained for 24 hours by the NADK in the north and later released.

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Afghanistan has asked the United Nations for emergency assistance for some 90,000 Tajik refugees who have fled to Afghanistan due to recent developments in Tajikistan.

In a letter to the Secretary-General of 11 January, the Afghan Permanent Mission to the United Nations said that "as a country that has experienced 14 years of war" and was faced with "an extremely difficult financial and economical situation", Afghanistan was not even in a position to provide basic services to meet the needs of its own population.

The letter asked for urgent emergency assistance for the Tajik refugees in the form of basic necessary commodities, such as foodstuffs, clothes, medicines and shelter.

Meanwhile, in a similar request to the Secretary-General, Tajikistan has asked for "active aid and assistance from the United Nations, the Commonwealth of Independent States [the former Soviet Union] and other international and regional organizations".

The request was contained in a letter, signed by Lakim K. Kayumov, Tajikistan's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, who said the civil conflict in Tajikistan had caused "immense material damage". The painful consequences of that conflict would be felt by the Tajik people for years to come, the letter said.
Document A/48/64, S/25098.

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The League of Arab States has urged the Security Council "to devise an appropriate mechanism" to enforce the implementation of the 1949 Geneva

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Convention on protection of civilians in time of war, in particular by "the establishment of an international force" to protect Palestinians in the occupied Arab territories.

The request was contained in a resolution adopted by the Council of the League of Arab States, meeting in extraordinary session at the level of Foreign Ministers on 11 and 12 January to discuss the recent expulsion by Israel of some 400 Palestinians from the Gaza Strip to southern Lebanon.

While condemning Israel for the deportation and warning of the "grave dangers arising from this violation", the Arab League called upon the Security Council to "speedily adopt ... measures to ensure the necessary relief for the Palestinian deportees by way of the Palestinian territory".

The resolution was transmitted to the President of the Security Council in a letter signed by Ibrahim A. Omar, the Libyan Deputy Permanent Representative to the United Nations.
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The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women opened its 12th session in Vienna today devoted to the examination of the situation of women. Over the next three weeks, the Committee will discuss the measures taken by a number of States which are parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to ensure the equal participation of women in political, economic and cultural life.

The Committee will also review the implications for its work of the priority themes of the Commission on the Status of Women. These priority themes include increased awareness by women of their rights, including legal literacy; women in extreme poverty; integration of women's concerns in national development planning; and women and the peace process.

The Convention, described as the "single most authoritative legal document" to emerge from the United Nations Decade for Women (1976-1985) sets standards for countries to improve the conditions under which women live and work.

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A three-day Disarmament Seminar on arms proliferation and confidence- and security-building measures commenced today in Asuncion, Paraguay. It will focus on the military dimension of security; security and its economic dimension; and regional mechanisms for registration of arms transfers, safeguarding the exclusively civilian use of dual-purpose technology transfers and inter-State consultations on those matters.

Held under the auspices of the United Nations and financed from voluntary contributions by the Governments of Canada and Norway, the seminar is organized by the Office for Disarmament Affairs through its Regional Centre

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for Peace, Disarmament and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean with headquarters in Lima and in cooperation with the Government of Paraguay.

The seminar forms part of the activities of the Office for Disarmament Affairs as a means to promote regional approaches to disarmament in the changed international environment.

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